

Committee On Human Services:

My name is Melissa Wesaw, and I am a proud member of the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation located in Kent. I appreciate this opportunity to speak on Bill #5336, emphasizing the importance of Indian Child Welfare Act, not only as a mother of four young children, but someone who as an attorney practiced in tribal court, and as a parent who utilized the ICWA recently.

Going through a divorce from my ex-husband who is a non-enrolled member from a reservation in Wyoming, while I am an active enrolled member of the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation. Our four boys are also active members within Schaghticoke Tribal Nation that condignly learn everyday about their heritage. Sadly, Indigenous curriculum in general is something our school district has left behind. If not for Indian Child Welfare Act, I could not have kept my children here where they belong, where their reservation, heritage and culture exist.

I cannot stress the importance of keeping Native children with their family and culture, but you the Committee must give serious thought in how damaging it would be to keep a young child from their heritage and their way of life.

Whether it be an adoption, termination of rights or a divorce. Recognizing where a child comes from and the importance of keeping them with family, in a familiar environment is gravely important, not to support this Bill will bring great harm to our children.

May the Creator help guild you in your decision by voting in favor of Bill 5336

Thank you,
Melissa Wesaw
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